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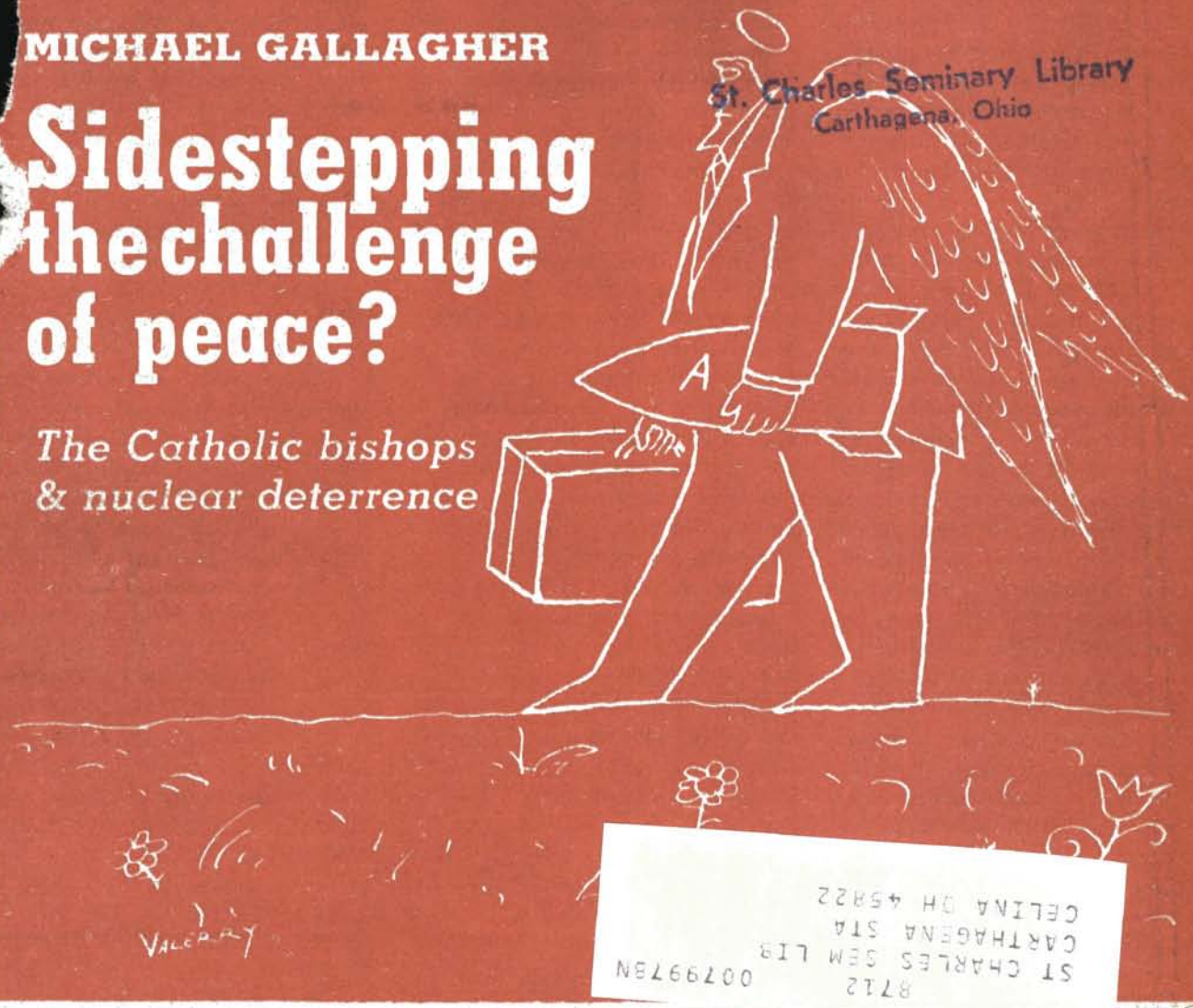
COMMONWEAL

MICHAEL GALLAGHER

Sidestepping the challenge of peace?

The Catholic bishops & nuclear deterrence



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Germany to the polls
FREDERICK O. BONKOVSKY

Religious ignorance
DAVID R. CARLIN, JR.

Reviews:
TOM O'BRIEN
GERALD WEALES
WILLIAM DUNLEA
PHEME PERKINS
ROBERT L. SPAETH

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CORRESPONDENCE

About arms control

Washington, D.C.

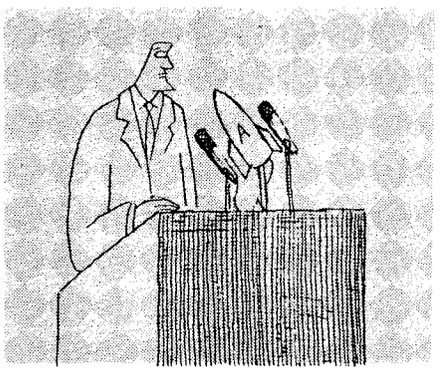
To the Editors: In two editorials on arms control ["Rethinking Arms Control," June 6, and "SALT Free," June 20], *Commonweal* has misrepresented both the details and overall character of current U.S. policy. The editorials give an oversimplified and basically inaccurate picture of the situation in arms control today.

Let us begin with *Commonweal*'s claim that "the U.S. has committed a crucial error by shifting its interest in arms control from the *character* of weapons to their *number*." This is a remarkable assertion in light of the facts, which are the opposite. This administration came to office criticizing previous strategic arms control agreements precisely for using the number of launchers as the unit of account while ignoring the characteristics of their missiles and warheads. Where past administrations accepted agreements based largely on quantitative criteria, this administration has consistently sought clear qualitative as well quantitative limits. Specifically, the administration has attempted to gain an agreement reducing significantly those weapons systems whose characteristics of fast flight time, high accuracy, and multiple powerful warheads, e.g., Soviet MIRVed heavy missiles, pose a first-strike threat against U.S. retaliatory forces. The administration is already busy doing exactly what your editorial demands it should: attempting to control destablizing systems. It is addressing the question that, quoting Thomas E. Schelling, you say should be addressed: "is it [the weapon system] destabilizing or not?"

In citing what you call "the Catholic bishops' letter on peace" (actually "the Pastoral Letter on War and Peace") as an "outside pressure" forcing the administration to negotiate, you overlook the fact that before the letter was published the administration had been already carrying out one of the main efforts the bishops urge support for in their letter: ". . . negotiated bilateral *deep cuts* in the arsenals of both superpowers, particularly those weapons systems which have destabilizing characteristics . . ." [emphasis added].

The editorial criticizes the administration's intermediate-range nuclear force negotiating proposal on grounds that our "elimination scheme" includes "the very missiles" we "deployed in Europe." This ignores the fact that NATO's objective from the first was to reach an agreement which would eliminate the Pershing II, the Ground Launched Cruise Missile, and the SS-20, if possible, *before* a single U.S. Pershing II or GLCM was deployed. When the Soviet Union refused for fifteen months to work constructively towards this goal, NATO proposed an interim, global agreement involving deep reductions, as a first step leading to total elimination. This remains NATO's position today: the complete elimination of this class of weapon system, through staged reduction over a three-year period.

The editorial states that "the Strategic Defense Initiative does not fit well the goals of arms control primarily because it envisions a unilateral ability of the U.S. to ward off a Soviet nuclear attack." In making this charge you ignore the administration's repeatedly and clearly stated policy that SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiations between the U.S. and the Soviet Uni Moreover, the president has stated if fenses prove feasible, both sides ca expected to deploy them. Your claim the original spirit of the ABM T "would have allowed systems n simply to defend land-based wea rather than cities" is factually incor The only operational ABM syste existence today defends the city of M cow, as it did when the ABM Treaty w signed in 1972. This system is being a tively upgraded today.



Your remarks on the subject of an satellite systems similarly oversimpl the issues. "Why, in the name of arm control," you ask, "must the U.S. matc the Soviet anti-satellite weapons tit for tat?" This entirely overlooks the serio verification problems associated with comprehensive ASAT ban, including the very real problem of defining what is and is not an anti-satellite weapon, to say nothing of the threat which the Soviet ASAT system currently poses to U.S. and allied forces. In fact, the administration has worked toward resolution of these various arms control issues in the Ad Hoc Committee on Disarmament in Geneva along lines originally proposed by the United States. The administration has always maintained that while there are formidable difficulties to overcome, the door is not closed to effective ASAT arms control measures.

Your criticism of the president's May

(Continued on page 26)

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COMMONWEAL

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Labor & the limits of the market place

There's a crude but widespread belief that human labor is just another form of merchandise, a species of raw material or energy to which the marketplace's laws of supply and demand must apply exactly as they do to iron ore, electricity, and artichokes. This is bad ethics and bad economics. It is bad ethics because (a) human labor cannot be separated from the human laborers, who ought not to be treated like porkbellies, and (b) human labor is not just a means to an end but an end in itself, a way of *being* human. It is bad economics for pretty much the same reasons. The fact that you can't separate the work from the worker means that what makes obvious sense when applied to raw materials may have a very different impact when applied to labor. A company that upgrades crude oil by refining it still controls the improved product. A company that upgrades labor by training programs may not reap the benefits if the better trained workers thereby become all the more likely to take their new skills elsewhere. The labor market is marked by all sorts of special characteristics, and indeed it has never behaved the way that economic theories say it should. Since labor constitutes the greatest cost in most production, this suggests quite a bit about the weakness of economic theories.

The economic theories currently in favor have particularly stumbled in dealing with full employment, which the bishops call "the foundation of a just economy." The U.S. is now entering the fifth year of an economic expansion. Standard expectations are for continued but mushy growth. Unemployment, however, will most likely not decrease but continue to hold at a level much higher than in any previous expansion—roughly 7 percent, or eight million people still in search of work and unable to find it. Since 1982 the economy has generated new jobs at a rate that rightly impresses Europe and Japan, although new jobs actually increased here even more during the economic upturn of the second half of the seventies. Still, with more people entering the job market for whatever reason (and the need for more income, especially on the part of second wage earners in families, seems the most likely one), the number of new jobs has been insufficient to bring unemployment down to former levels.

All this turmoil in employment—some people gaining, some people losing, with a high rate of joblessness at the bottom line—is commonly explained by the massive "restructuring" of the American economy. Behind this hygienic term is a basic change. From World War II on, much of American labor escaped the crude economics referred to earlier; in many major industries a pattern was set that removed labor, at least relatively, from the harshest pressures of competition. Firms sought competitive advantage by innovation, marketing, cost-cutting in materials or production—but generally not cutbacks in wages. Labor had to struggle for a greater share in the gains that came with increased productivity, but it could build rather

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confidently on what had already been achieved. The gains of the past were sometimes guaranteed by legislation setting minimum wages or other benefit standards, sometimes assured by countervailing trade union power.

Needless to say, the situation has changed drastically. The inflation and energy squeeze of the seventies, the shift to a service economy, the growth of a global economy, the waves of takeovers and sales—all have stripped away the buffers that once gave labor some exemption from the penalties of competition. Union power, concentrated in older industries and manufacturing regions, has eroded. Minimum-wage laws have been undercut by inflation. Workers in the U.S. are pitted against low-wage workers in Mexico or the Far East. "Givebacks"and lockouts have become a regular part of labor-management contention. Real wages have been stuck, and a majority of unionized firms are now trying to institute two-tiered wage scales, paying less to the newly hired. Even executives are caught in the maelstrom. Large numbers of managers find themselves shucked off as companies merge operations or shift their focus or strip off operations in order to pay for financial skirmishing: twenty thousand middle managers lost their jobs in 1985, most of them middle-aged, long-time employees. Lay-offs for ordinary workers are, of course, in the millions.

All is supposed to work out for the best in this competitive world. But it doesn't. A year ago, Congress produced a study of the 11.5 million workers who lost jobs between 1979 and 1984 when plants moved or closed. Out of each 100 such workers, 40 remained without employment despite the sharp economic upswing after 1982. Of the 60 who found work, 27 did so at lower wages; for 18 of these, it was as though they had been docked a day's pay each week. No surprise: for women and minorities the figures were worse. Many of these workers were not young and transient but, according to the congressional report, were middle-aged "with long and stable job histories."

Along with the plight of displaced workers has arisen the existence of what *Business Week* recently called "disposable" employees: "To augment their cost-cutting—and in a few cases to neutralize unions—companies have started creating pools of 'contingent' workers to replace regular employees working traditional 40-hour weeks." These employees may work for outside contractors, or do piecework at home, or involuntarily "fill in" part-time. Their numbers have doubled since 1980. Add to them voluntary part-time workers, and the total equals approximately 25 percent of today's work force. Some of these workers may have gained flexibility; most are losing out in pay, benefits, and security. Disposable workers "keep payrolls lean and flexible in line with production flows," points out *Business Week*. "And since most part-timers work for less than full-timers and often receive no retirement or health benefits, labor costs can be slashed still further." The magazine warns, however, that companies have no stake in upgrading the skills of such employees. And taxpayers are asked to pick up the tab for benefits that have previously been part of the wage package.

Unemployment, underpaid employment, insecure employment—these are not inevitable conditions. Economists are as loose in their use of the word "natural" as are cereal manufacturers. Whatever can't be explained or altered by their theories becomes "natural." Thus, with only amateurs like the Catholic bishops dissenting, the 7 percent unemployment rate has been declared natural. Due to the changing nature of the work force—the recent entry of less-skilled baby boomers, minority groups, and housewives—pushing unemployment below the 7 percent mark would be costly and provoke inflation. Unfortunately for this gospel-truth theory, a recent study by Richard S. Krashevski has calculated what would have happened if these supposedly less-skilled groups had remained no greater a portion of the labor force than in the low-unemployment 1960s. Result: demographic changes in the work force can explain little more than a quarter of the increased unemployment rate.

Another popular belief among economists is that the minimum wage is so high as to discourage the hiring of teenagers and especially black teenagers. Now the same issue of *Business Week* that reported the Krashevski study notes that this thesis has been the object of an unplanned experiment. Thanks to inflation, the minimum wage's real value has dropped over 20 percent since 1980. It also used to equal about half of the average production wage; now it's only 38 percent. What has been the impact on teenage and black teenage unemployment? Zilch.

The path to full employment is not obvious even though what are commonly taken to be barriers turn out to be something less. The new Congress is certain to be a more hospitable environment for seeking and examining solutions, which will inevitably touch on measures like public works, early planning and intervention in plant closings, job retraining, employment search services, national standards for health and pension benefits, provision of child care, anti-discrimination efforts, and basic education. The details of each and every proposal will be important. But the whole discussion will get nowhere unless it is supported by a fundamental recognition that both ethically and economically labor must be treated differently than the other factors in economic life.

THE NEW LOOK

For the first time since 1978 *Commonweal* has changed its look. For the first time since 1965 we have redesigned the logo. In 1965 we explained that the new format "was designed to better express the contemporary nature of the ideas, issues, and events" the magazine brings to its readers. In 1978, we announced our change in a long editorial associating it with what we saw as a new phase in the life of post-Vatican II American Catholicism.

Well, we have no such highfalutin claims to make this time around. The new look arises purely from a spirit of playful-

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ness, an impulse to try something else, a desire to work within a different esthetic framework. We've changed our design for the same reason that people once decorated their shields and today keep seeking new shapes for skyscrapers, for the same reason that people periodically shift their furniture or alter the frames of their eyeglasses.

That doesn't mean that the new format emerged without a lot of thought, debate, hard work — and a trial run in the special supplement to the last issue in 1986. The design was created by Emil Antonucci only after much consultation with the editors about *Commonweal*'s resources, schedule, special production needs, and the distinctive "feel" of each section of the magazine. Mr. Antonucci is no stranger to *Commonweal*, however. The 1965 design and logo were his work, as are many of the graphics we regularly use. Mr. Antonucci teaches at Parsons School of Design. He has worked in many media, from sculpture to film. He is the designer of the original logo and graphics for the Four Seasons restaurant in Manhattan, and is presently updating them. His magazine work includes the design for *Church*, published by the National Pastoral Life Center.

Of necessity, *Commonweal* is printed on inexpensive paper stock, which can easily give the magazine a "gray" look. Our new design employs striking rules and heavy initials to counter this tendency and give the pages touches of bold contrast. The typeface used for these initials, as for the logo and other standing heads, is Gill Ultra. It was designed by Eric Gill (1882-1940), English sculptor, wood engraver, typographer, and artisan-philosopher, some of whose writings appeared in *Commonweal*.

A CAUSE FOR ALARM

Last October, black dignitaries crowded the Russell Building in Washington D.C. to celebrate the unveiling of a bust of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., the first black to be honored in the Capitol's Statuary Hall. That same month, at The Citadel, a venerable military college in South Carolina, seventeen-year-old Kevin Nesmith was awakened by the obscene shouts of five white classmates dressed as Ku Klux Klansmen. They left a burning newspaper cross in his room.

This episode presented the country with a sobering experience of *déjà vu*, a scandal suited more to the fifties than to the eighties. It spoiled whatever comfort one might take from the fact that in the fifties there were no black cadets at the Citadel,

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while Nesmith was one of 116 black cadets among 1196. The racially motivated harassment of one black student does not refute the progress that has been made toward racial equality after twenty years of civil rights legislation and public awareness. But each such case is cause for alarm. And would that there were only one.

Five days before Christmas, twenty-three-year-old Michael Griffith lay dead on Shore Parkway in Queens, New York after he and two other blacks, who had ventured into an unfamiliar neighborhood, were chased and beaten by a gang of local white youths wielding a baseball bat and tree limb. To escape the group Griffith crawled through a hole in a fence and onto the highway where he was struck by a car.

Racial violence so blatant can make the climb to the mountaintop of the just society Dr. King envisioned appear like the slope of Sisyphus, with society destined ever to struggle toward an unachievable goal. Or it can strengthen our resolve to check step by step racial hatred and the self-justifying rationale that is taught and learned by each generation.

Sometimes racial prejudgments are founded upon ugly traces of reality — that young black males do in fact commit a disproportionately high share of crime, for example, ten times the robbery rate of whites. Yet to solve crime requires law enforcement and prevention through combined efforts at creating jobs, reconstructing families, inculcating particular values, breaking drug dependency, and offering youth serious opportunities to earn a decent future livelihood. Discrimination based on fear of crime, however understandable a projection of fear it may be, tends to exacerbate the separate scourge of racism which, in turn, discredits and undercuts efforts at crime prevention in a destructive spiral.

There are signs of hope: public outrage itself; legal authorities in the front ranks of those expressing society's intolerance of racial bias; a black police commissioner and black attorneys involved in the Queens case; and an increasing public awareness that the Reagan administration's record on handling affirmative action, its direction for the Civil Rights Commission, its lack of commitment to welfare reform and youth employment must be held to account.

But law itself, though essential, cannot rid us of the pernicious beast of racism. While federal juries convicted nineteen former members of the Klan-like White Knights of Liberty and the leaders of the White Patriot Party, to cite just one recent example, the dispersed members of such groups are simply joining another organization with the same racist goals, the Christian Knights of the KKK, which held over sixty weekend rallies throughout the U.S. in 1986.

The truth may be that only the deep and continuous process of repentance and conversion will ultimately lead to racial reconciliation. This notion lay beneath Dr. King's nonviolent movement, the historical leadership of so many clergy in civil rights activities, and in Mayor Koch's appeals to both a black and a white congregation in Queens in the wake of the Griffith death. Yet Mayor Koch's gesture, controversial because of his past political statements and his use of the loaded term "lynching" to describe the case early on, was met with pronounced hostility at Our Lady of Grace Roman Catholic Church. "This has nothing to do with the Mass," one woman was reported as saying. Her words reveal a tragic lack of comprehension about the problem of racism and what is necessary to solve it. Repentance, conversion, reconciliation. . . . Aren't these precisely what the Mass is all about?

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

READERS & WRITERS

REFLECTING THE DEMANDS UPON WOMEN

The first column of the year is perhaps a good one in which to reflect on the relationship between writers and readers. Writing is a solitary business. The writer is often left wondering whether her best effort has been understood, whether she has clarified anything, or interpreted experience as she intended. Every once in a while one is struck by the fact that one's writing has had an effect that went way beyond its content and certainly way beyond its intent. I experienced two instances of this in the past few months.

In the first instance a young Argentine poet came to see me to discuss something I had written in my memoir *Private Faces/Public Places*. He looked the epitome of the international poet; he had an intelligent, sensitive face, longish hair sticking out in all directions, was balding a bit, and wearing the almost obligatory turtleneck and rumpled tweeds. Son of a diplomatic family who had been neighbors of ours in Washington when he was a little boy, he had then found the return to his native country traumatic. I had spent a day with them in Buenos Aires, and had written that on my return, when I was emptying my purse, I had wept when I found a pathetic note from him, "Dear Mrs. McCarthy, come back Saterday (*sic*) and take me to the United States." In his small child's mind he was trying to be conscientious — I was not to come back on a school day. I had wept because the note made me realize how at the mercy of their elders' lives are all children — theirs and mine. They are so often moved about in ways beyond their understanding.

He told me that coming upon that incident in my book when he was older had opened his eyes to that childhood pain which he had suppressed over the years. He said that reading about it had enabled him to face the pain, and that facing it had freed him to write as he had not been able

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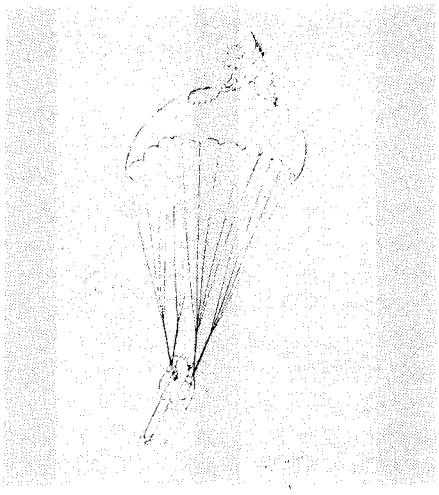
to write before. In a way peculiar to Argentina, he has become a well-known poet writing only in English which is almost an alternative language for the literate Argentine.

In the second instance I met a young woman at the Kennedy Book Fair (the book fair is a story in itself, but for another time). She was on her way to catch a plane, accompanied by her parents who had been taking care of her year-old daughter during the fair, and, as truly doting grandparents, were loath to say good-by until the very last moment. She was an art historian and had been showing a book of photographs and commentary at the fair. She was, I learned in talking to her, every bit the young mother seen so often today — busy every minute, carrying on a career equal to her husband's, and sharing child care with him. Another baby was on the way, and, even with help for it, this young mother was heavily burdened.

She astonished me by telling me that her decision to have a career of her own had been strengthened by a character in my novel, *Circles*. Sarah, the character, and the wife of the television commentator in the story, had been moved to return to her career by contemplating the life of her newly-widowed mother, who insisted that she had been happy in her life but also said wistfully, "I wish I had had something of my own." No fiction writer intends his or her characters to have such an effect. If I had any intent in creating Sarah, it was simply to depict a young woman faced with the choices of her time. I was somewhat dismayed by the young art historian's statement — "Sarah made me realize that I didn't want to live another person's life." And yet wasn't that what Sarah herself might have said?

Such interchanges with readers give a writer new insights and stimulate reflections on some of the aspects of human life she has dealt with in the past — in this case the situation of women and their relationship with their dependent children. The young woman was fiercely determined that that dependence would not rob her of her own separate life. The poet's story spoke of the effect of that dependence on the child.



Interestingly enough the poet, in speaking of his evolution as a writer, had also touched on the situation of women. He had worked as a journalist on the influential Buenos Aires English-language newspaper during the terrible years of the generals and the *desaparecidos* — the "disappeareds," those Argentines seized from the streets or from their houses at night, most of them never to be heard from again. Year after year demonstrations led by the *Madres*, the so-called mothers, went on in the plaza before the governmental palace. Women protested the seizures; women demanded the return of those taken.

"Ours was the only paper that would publish their stories and their demands," he said. "Again and again they came. It is strange, but it was only afterwards that I realized that it was only women who had the courage to do that, and to keep doing it. Mothers came, sisters, wives, girl friends, but never a man — oh, maybe once or twice a shamefaced husband dragged there by his wife. But it was women who had the courage and the endurance. I had a cold feeling at the back of my neck when I realized it. Why didn't I realize it before?"

Years ago woman poet Adrienne Rich called it the underground life of women — "the woman in the family, coping, hoarding, preserving, observing . . . seeing through the myths and hypocrisies, nursing the sick, conspiring with sister women, possessed of a will to survive and to see others survive." This underground life could be called underground because it was neither recognized or valued. Like the young poet, the world looked at the women "possessed of a will to survive and see others survive" and did not *see* them. So, like the young art historian, contemporary women are determined to become visible, to give to their lives the value the world recognizes: a career worth monetary reward. And yet, like her, the majority remain women in the family coping and nurturing, as best they can, the young who, like the poet, will be marked by the experience of that family. It is a situation that may find its resolution when we all recognize, as the poet belatedly did, the strength women at their best can offer. And find ways to value it. Even after all these years of the study of women's liberation this remains a problem for any writer who is drawn to it as a subject.

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE

A CLEAR & PUBLIC DANGER

No one who wants to understand American society and its history can do so without understanding the nature and history of religion in America. From John Winthrop and Anne Hutchinson to Pat Robertson and Raymond Hunthausen, religion has played a vital role in American life.

Despite this, scads of people who are otherwise well-informed about the world around them — folks who wouldn't dream of allowing themselves to be any-

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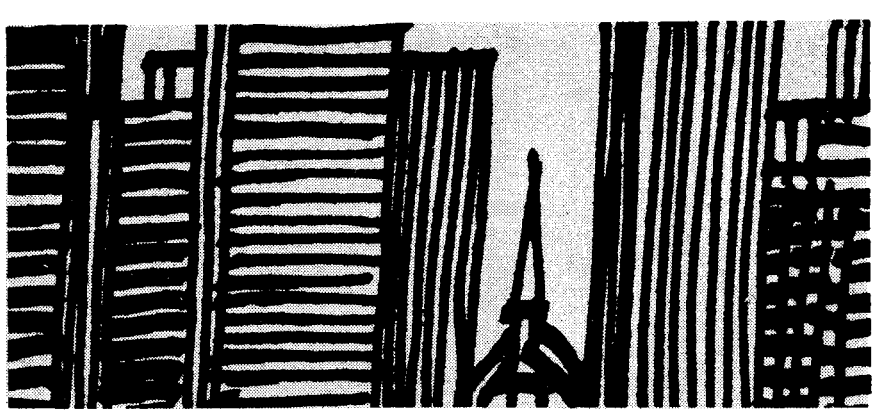
thing less than up-to-speed about politics, business, or even sports — remain chronically underinformed about the religious life of their society. What's more, this lack of knowledge causes them neither embarrassment nor anxiety; truly, their ignorance is a blissful one.

There are many causes for this state of affairs, too many to mention in the brief space available.

But for starters, there is the privatization of religion, which is an almost inevitable, though perhaps not quite logical, extension of the American wall of separation between church and state. If religion is a strictly private matter, then the other fellow's religion must be none of my business, and mine none of his. Close inquires into the religious lives of our neighbors are as impertinent as close inquiries into their sex lives. Indeed, in today's cultural climate the former are perhaps even more impertinent than the latter; for public confessions about one's sexual curriculum vitae are nowadays regarded as far less embarrassing, it seems, than public confessions about one's religious history. (If you doubt this, check the Phil Donahue show.) What consenting adults and their children do behind the closed doors of church, temple, or mosque is nobody's business but their own. And it doesn't matter that the fate of the republic, as Tocqueville insisted so long ago, may hinge on what goes on behind those closed doors. Their religious privacy is an inalienable right, and my religious ignorance is a correlative inalienable duty.

For another, there is the notorious reluctance of public schools to teach about religion. I'm not referring, it need hardly be said, to their unwillingness to engage in religious indoctrination, which is clearly constitutionally forbidden, but to their unwillingness to examine religion as a social and historical phenomenon, which is not at all forbidden. How are high school students to understand American history or English literature, for instance, if they don't possess, at a minimum, a nodding acquaintance with the varieties of Anglo-American Protestant experience? Not to worry, I'll be told. Ninety-nine percent of our high school students are bored to tears with American history and English literature to begin with; so it's not as if their non-instruction in religion has frustrated a burning zeal on their part for literary and historical enlightenment. True, perhaps. But it's just possible, isn't it, that one of the reasons they find history and literature so deadly dull is that they are victims of a conspiracy of silence that ignores, or at any rate grossly understates, the religious dimension of those subjects? This may not be quite as bad as performing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark. But it is at least as bad as performing *Death of a Salesman* without reference to Willy Loman's occupation.

But pity the poor school board and superintendent. They deal with religion in a very gingerly manner for the same reason they deal with sex education in a very gingerly manner; both are terribly controversial subjects. Try to treat either in a serious manner, and you'll provoke a hurricane of angry parents — the kind of storm that has the potential for blowing you out of office. Who needs it? The safest policy with regard to sex, religion, and all other controversial subjects, therefore, is to say nothing that is not perfectly innocuous.



Yet another cause of religious ignorance is a rather quaint secularism popular among certain influential strata of American society. In the nineteenth century the intellectual avant-garde who sat at the feet of such masters as Comte, Feuerbach, and Nietsche confidently expected the imminent disappearance of supernatural religion, which had become plainly incompatible, they believed, with the scientific and technological spirit of the modern age. Well, this disappearance seems to have been indefinitely postponed, at least in America, where religion shows remarkable persistence and vitality. But discredited philosophies of history don't simply vanish. Sometimes, in fact, they do just the opposite. Cast off by the well-educated, they are picked up by the semi-educated, who wear them as badges of what they imagine to be enlightenment and up-to-dateness, little suspecting that they are rendering themselves a half-century or so out of fashion. But since the semi-educated greatly outnumber the well-educated, an exploded philosophy of history, e.g., secularism, may well have its largest constituency a generation or two after it has become intellectually indefensible. As a result, every day one runs into people who are convinced they have barely more need to examine American religion than to examine, say, American vaudeville; for American religion is destined, sooner or later, to arrive where American vaudeville has already arrived, namely, in history's graveyard of irrelevant institutions.

I don't make the above observation in the spirit of pious lamentation; my motive is a strictly secular one. For all I know, more widespread knowledge of American religion may serve to undermine religion; this would not be the first time, after all, that knowledge led to relativism, and relativism to skepticism and indifference. But whatever its value or disvalue for religion itself, there can be no question that this religious ignorance is a dangerous state of affairs for anyone who has the worldly obligation — and in a republic, this is an obligation that falls on every citizen — to reflect intelligently and critically upon the condition of his or her society.

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SIDESTEPPING THE CHALLENGE OF PEACE

THE BISHOPS & NUCLEAR DETERRENCE

MICHAEL GALLAGHER

The United Methodists have come out and said no to nuclear war (*In Defense of Creation: The Nuclear Crisis and a Just Peace*, Graded Press, $3.25, 96 pp.). And they were pretty rude about it, going so far as to gore the grazed ox of deterrence, the gentle beast that the pope himself once gave a memorable pat on the rump.

"We have concluded," say the Methodists, "that nuclear deterrence is a position that cannot receive the church's blessing." Then further on, implicitly likening the ox to the golden calf, they declare: "Nuclear deterrence has too long been reverenced as the idol of national security. . . . The ideology of deterrence must not receive the churches' blessing even as a temporary warrant for holding onto nuclear weapons."

Now isn't that just like the Protestants, I said to myself when I read that. Protestants don't believe in doing things by halves. But we Roman Catholics do. You can't beat us for making distinctions and spinning out airy nuances, for giving Caesar full credit and a fair interest rate, too. Why, we're fully capable of taking a stand on a controversial issue and disturbing nobody at all but Michael Novak and William F. Buckley, who don't count because they're two of our own.

But then after thanking God that I wasn't a simplistic Protestant and that I belonged to so subtle and sophisticated and optimistic and Chestertonian a religious tradition, I had second thoughts. To be specific, I thought of Stanley. I met Stanley four years ago. It was a time, if you recall, when fear and expectation were abroad in the land that that most patriotic of churches, the Roman Catholic, was going to bestir itself and say something drastic about nuclear weapons and so jeopardize the marriage of cross and flag that churchmen like Francis Cardinal Spellman had consummated with such ardor. It was in those heady days that I recruited a group to read and discuss the second draft of *The Challenge of Peace*, advertising the endeavor in our parish bulletin.

I got six people willing to devote one night a week for six weeks during Lent. Five of them I knew. They were sincere people, apolitical for the most part, who were eager to know just what the bishops had said. One, Stanley, I didn't know. And it soon became evident that Stanley, although quite sincere himself, was of a different cast of mind.

Now I won't say that Stanley was then or at any other time a member of the CIA. Let's just say that Stanley was not adverse to letting us think that something of the sort might have been the case, though indeed his extensive travels in the Far East and other places, to which he dropped oblique allusions, may have been nothing more than the customary itinerary of, say, a marshmallow salesman, for all we knew.

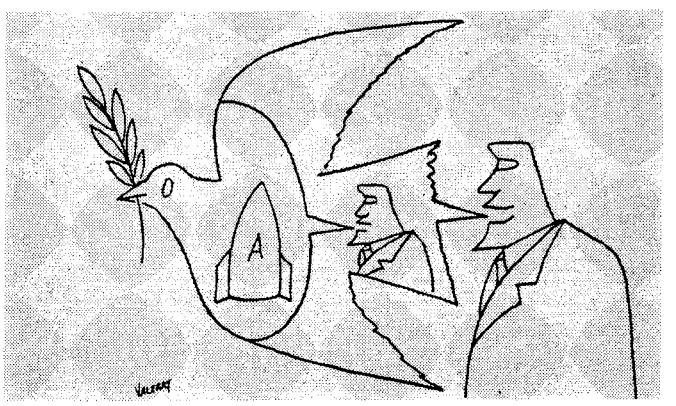
What matters is that Stanley was about as far to the right as you can get, and, as you might expect, he took the peace pastoral as a personal affront. Before he read it, that is. When we finished our study, Stanley was no longer much concerned one way or the other.

"They waffled," said Stanley. "It's obvious. If they really believed what they say they believe about nuclear weapons, then I don't see how they could have come to the conclusion they came to."

Keep in mind, now, who's talking. Not Dan Berrigan (who said the equivalent) but Stanley, a wholehearted advocate of muscular Christianity at its most brawny and a fervent anti-Communist.

By "waffling" of course, Stanley meant the approval of deterrence, however gussied up with qualifications, an approval designated as the "strictly conditioned moral acceptance of nuclear deterrence." Stanley had a logical mind and, conditions or no conditions, he knew the moral equivalent of a blank check when he saw one.

Let me confide in you: Stanley turned out to be right. Look



MICHAEL GALLAGHER, *a free-lance writer and translator from the Japanese, received a National Book Award nomination in 1973 for his translation of Yukio Mishima's* Spring Snow. *He worked for ten years for the U.S. Catholic Conference in communications.*

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at it this way: The Battling Bishops of the Roman Catholic church are leading the Patriots of Military-Industrial Tech 1-0 in the bottom of the ninth. With two outs and the tying run on first, the Bishops' pitcher rears back and lets fly with a gopher ball. Wham! Into the centerfield bleachers! And there goes the old ball game, as well as all the fancy glovework and timely hitting that had gone before. And not only did the American bishops serve up a whopping gopher ball in *The Challenge of Peace,* but we have not heard even so much as a peep out of the committee set up a few years ago to gauge how well a properly chastened Reagan administration would heed the admonitions contained in the pastoral.

Let me save this committee further expense on coffee and Danish: the Reagan administration has no more regard for your letter than does Stanley. If the president's old buddy David Stockman couldn't convey nuances to him, do you think you would have any better luck?

To be fair to the bishops, it's crystal clear that what weighed heavily upon their deliberations in 1982 and 1983 was a qualification John Paul II had delivered in a speech to the United Nations on a June day in 1982 that should go down as a bleak day for the Gospel as a whole and for moral theology in particular. "In current conditions," said the pope, " 'deterrence' based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable." Wham! "Morally acceptable"! A gopher ball as broad as a harvest moon.

Although the second and the final drafts of the Peace Pastoral took their cue from this ill-conceived papal concession, the first version (apparently written before the speech, though released just after it) stated in terms plain enough to please a United Methodist bishop that the "deterrence relationship which prevails between the United States, the Soviet Union, and other powers is *objectively a sinful situation*" (emphasis mine). The phrase "sinful situation" survived in quotation marks in the second draft ("All of these conditions are the reason we have called the arms race, with deterrence as its key element, a "sinful situation"), but somebody pruned it from the final version, and, thanks to this kindest cut of all, we can all relax.

Also present, and quite prominent, in versions one and two, but gone from the final version, was this lapidary sentence buried in *To Live in Christ Jesus,* a pastoral whose 1976 release was one of those great non-events that crowd American ecclesiastical history: "As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must also be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations, but *it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as part of a strategy of deterrence*" (emphasis mine).

It's obvious why the bishops banished this alarming declaration. For it might well have given the logically-minded—a characteristic prized in Roman Catholicism—cause to wonder how something could be "wrong" and yet "still morally acceptable." These spoilsports might be especially puzzled as to how the strategy of deterrence could be wrong in 1976 and still morally acceptable in 1982, a time when the hands of the clock had edged closer to midnight.

Let's think for a bit. Let's get wild and imaginative with our logic. Suppose the American hierarchy took their stance vis-à-vis their country's preparations for nuclear massacre as a model for their pronouncements in other areas of moral theology.

Suppose, in other words, they came out today with like concessions in the area of sexual morality, of mercy killing, and of abortion. Suppose the bishops said that in exceptional circumstances such things as sexual intercourse outside of

A classic case of consequentialism

In *The Ratzinger Report*, that strange and unguarded apology for the views of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger on the church, moral theology, and sex, one revealing passage serves as an explanation for — among other things — the dismissal of Father Charles Curran from the theology faculty of Catholic University.

In chapter six, "The Drama of Morality" Ratzinger identifies "Europe and the United States" as the areas of crisis where "the models elaborated in these zones eventually end up in the rest of the world with the help of a well-known (sic) cultural imperialism."

These words seem to be the words of the reporter, Vittorio Messori, but the following are unmistakably Ratzinger's:

> Well, one has arrived at the so-called "morality of ends" — or, as it is preferred in the United States where it is particularly developed and diffused—of "consequences," "consequentialism": Nothing in itself is good or bad, the goodness of an act depends entirely upon its end and upon its foreseeable and calculated consequences. After becoming aware of the problematic character of such a system, some moralists have attempted to tone down "consequentialism" to "proportionalism": moral conduct depends upon the evaluation and weighing of the proportion of goods that are involved. Again it is a matter of individual evaluation, this time an evaluation of the "proportion" between good and evil.

While condemning consequentialism in the United States, Cardinal Ratzinger seems to ignore the extent to which the morality of ends informs the judgments of the Holy See when it addresses the moral questions of international political life, in particular those posed by the military confrontation of the two superpowers. In his 1982 address to the United Nations, the Holy Father, speaking through Cardinal Casaroli, said that (nuclear) "deterrence based on balance, certainly not as an end in itself but as a

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marriage, homosexual acts, a fatal injection for a terminally ill cancer victim or deformed baby, and an abortion might be morally justified. What would happen?

Let's be honest now. Let's be practical. Let's get away from the groves of academe, from those pleasant seminars and workshops, from the germ-free, child-free environments that seem to be the habitat of American Catholic theologians, and get back to what, for want of a better term, we'll call the real world—a place where Twisted Sister, Motley Crue, Miami Vice, and Rambo have their brief time in the sun and, before yielding to other idols, reign over American youth. This is the kind of world that Catholic parents must contend with, and this is the front I'm talking about.

What would happen? No matter how exceptional the circumstances detailed in each case, no matter how hedged about and bristling with conditions, the result of such episcopal largess would be to reduce the effective teaching authority of the church to a shambles. Nobody would know what to be-

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step on the way toward a progressive disarmament, may still be judged morally acceptable."

In context the end is not that of "progressive disarmament" which was not then and is not now a realistic prospect, but rather that of deterring the Soviet Union from a rash attempt to conquer Western Europe. In this context the means of deterrence are to be seen in the capability and conditional intention (threat) of the United States to respond to such an attempt with limited and perhaps all-out nuclear war. One can readily infer that the Holy See, encouraged by certain NATO governments, did not wish to see any moral aspersion cast upon the NATO "flexible response" strategy which envisages a nuclear response to a conventional Soviet/Warsaw Pact attack.

This concern is clearly expressed in the reports of the meeting in Rome on January 18 and 19, 1983, at which Cardinal Bernardin and Archbishop Roach were called upon to discuss the second draft of the American bishops' pastoral letter, and to clear up what the Holy See regarded as certain ambiguities. In a lengthy but "unofficial" summary of that meeting, which was attended by bishops from the major NATO countries, some participants "saw the possibility of first use as still necessary at this stage within the context of deterrence." Cardinal Ratzinger opined that the geopolitical context must be taken into account in judging the morality of deterrence. Cardinal Casaroli referred to the "common conviction" (in the West but also in the East) that the *only* (emphasis supplied) practical means at our disposal to avoid the two dangers — and which in substance at least has proven to be effective — is for the time being a sufficient deterrence (i.e., in fact today a nuclear deterrence). He had just previously identified the two dangers as the "danger of nuclear conflict" and that of "the imposition of an ideology and of a socialist regime."

Such arguments, in my view, present a classic case of consequentialist reasoning: to legitimate morally questionable means in order to safeguard desirable short-term political ends; a kind of optimization of bad means and good ends which the experts who worked on the German bishops' pastoral letter, *Out of Justice, Peace* characterized as proportionalism. The German letter was also at pains not to reject the NATO first use strategy, focusing instead on measures to maximize war prevention, i.e., nuclear deterrence.

The French bishops, in their pastoral letter, *Winning the Peace* insist that the immorality of use does not make the threat of the use immoral, even though they acknowledge that the French deterrent weapons are aimed at cities. Deterrence is the lesser evil that avoids capitulation. Needless to say, the French government did not regard this statement as a criticism of French policy.

The Catholic bishops of the United States and of the countries of NATO Europe thus find themselves approving a strategy which involves the readiness to "blow up the world" to fend off the menace of Soviet communism. They excuse themselves by arguing that there is no other practical and efficacious way of avoiding capitulation, and that if the threat is made credible enough there will never be any need to carry through on the threat. This rationale presents an ethic of probable consequences: the stronger (hence more credible) the resolve to do evil, the greater the probability that evil will be avoided. Whatever one thinks of this rationale, it is difficult to deny that it involves an ethic of ends of the kind Ratzinger condemns as consequentialism or proportionalism.

Evidently, the objections of the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to consequentialism and proportionalism apply particularly to the U.S. and particularly to questions of sexual ethics. Consequentialism in political ethics, even the ethics of nuclear war, seems to be acceptable. Is the pope's judgment as to the moral acceptability of nuclear deterrence a magisterial judgment, even though consequentialist? Or is it, to use that qualification now so popular in discussions of these matters, merely a prudential judgment?

One is tempted to suggest explicitly what the experience of centuries has taught Catholics about the papacy. The magisterium (ordinary, of course) is bound to be schizophrenic when the Holy See tries to be at one and the same time moral teacher and political actor.

EDWARD DOHERTY

(Edward Doherty, a retired diplomat, was adviser on political affairs at the U.S. Catholic Conference and assisted in the drafting of The Challenge of Peace. *He is currently writing and lecturing on these issues.)*

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lieve. Parents would have no idea what to tell their children.

Yes, I know, we are already sliding in this direction, thanks to the Touchy-Feely cast of so much religious education material and the dearth of effective pastoral guidance, but that only corroborates my contention that the overwhelming majority of American Catholics simply don't know what to think about their government's tireless and quite expensive preparations for nuclear massacre. True, most of us may be just as happy about the ambiguity since it seems to give us leave to think about something more congenial. But what becomes of that authentic Christian witness that bishops never tire of urging upon us in the abstract?

Yes, one of Andrew Greeley's surveys might reveal that Catholics are thinking in more dubious terms about the arms race, but while we're thinking more dubiously, the Reagan administration is doing more dubiously.

And, yes, George Shultz and Caspar Weinberger and Larry Speakes, coached like beauty pageant queens by Georgetown professors who believe in God and deterrence, and — supreme leap of faith — limited nuclear war, may now lard their apologias with terms such as "measured" and "proportionate," speak of "limiting collateral damage," and declare that they wouldn't dream of targeting population centers as such. But is anybody naive enough to think that anything has really changed since the pastoral came out in May 1983?

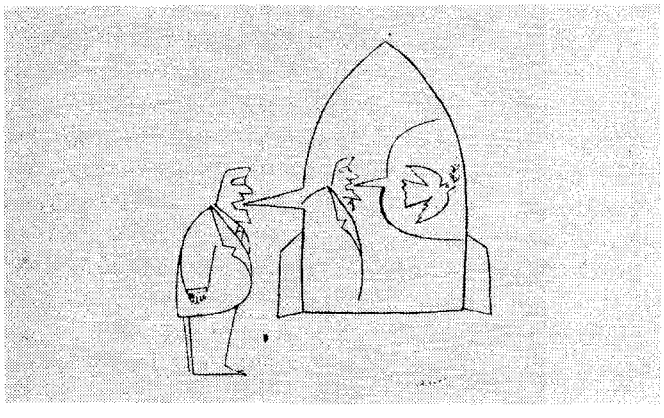
Except of course that the world is that much closer to nuclear massacre.

Except, of course, that we, the church, have hardened our hearts still more and turned our eyes away from the light still more determinedly.

But nothing has *actually happened,* you protest. I'm getting myself all worked up like a doily over an evil that, however great, is merely a *potential* evil. Yes, I am concerned about potential evil, about future evil—and my having three children under twelve intensifies my concern—but I'm also concerned, more concerned in fact, with *actual evil,* with *present evil.*

Say what?

"The ancients told you not to commit adultery," said Jesus, "but amen I say unto you whoever looks at a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery with her." The decision to yield to lust is not merely a *potential* evil but an *actual* evil. Or as we used to call it, a sin. I think it's a remarkable commentary on the sex-fixated character of American moral theology that no moral theologian seems to have thought of applying this supremely apt text to deterrence—to our looking at the great Russian population centers with lust for slaughter in our hearts. Much less has any theologian pondered the effect of an intention so intense and prolonged upon the mind and will of individuals and of the nation itself. For sin, like most things, gets easier with practice.



To the extent that the American bishops have acquiesced in this bloodlust, moreoever, they have compromised their witness not only with regard to modern war but *with regard to everything else as well.*

Listen to Susan:

> Dear American Hierarchy: I'm eighteen years old and a freshman at a Catholic college. I was a virgin until two months ago when I was gang raped in the lobby of my dormitory by six members of the football team—all of them on scholarships, all of them on drugs. Now I'm pregnant. May I have an abortion? Respectfully yours, Susan.
>
> Dear Susan: Our pastoral hearts are deeply grieved to hear about your problem, but the answer is no. Devotedly yours in Christ, the American Hierarchy.
>
> Dear A.H.: I don't see how you stand by and let that doddering old fool Reagan get ready to blow up the world and kill millions of pregnant women and their unborn babies and not let me have an abortion. S.
>
> Dear Susan: You don't understand. Unless we let Mr. Reagan get ready to blow up the world and kill millions of pregnant women and their unborn babies, the Russians will come and take over. How would you like to live in a society where Christian values count for nothing? A.H.
>
> Dear A.H.: Why don't you come and spend a few days in my dorm? S.

And if Susan were Suzanne, she would have had still greater cause for scandal, for if the American hierarchy waffled on the nuclear issue, the French hierarchy simply capitulated, accommodating themselves to a Socialist government as nimbly as their predecessors accommodated themselves to the Bourbons.

In their pastoral letter of 1983, *Winning the Peace*, the French bishops acknowledge that theirs is a "poor man's deterrent," which "rests on an anti-city strategy, itself clearly condemned, without appeal, by (Vatican II)." "But," they say, "threat is not use. Does the immorality of use render the threat immoral? This is not evident."

This is not evident. Jesus wept.

Let's see how this naughty-to-do-but-okay-to-threaten-to-do works out in practice. Take the case of Fred, a Catholic and a captain in the Air Force. Given the proper order, Fred will turn a key and push a few buttons in his bunker beneath the Great Plains, and he'll kill more people than Adolf Hitler or Genghis Khan at his most sanguine ever dreamed of slaughtering.

Suppose, furthermore, that Fred, a man committed to nuclear massacre and also a married man, goes to a bar on a night

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off from the old bunker, has a few drinks, and then goes to bed with a friendly woman he happened to meet.

Now we know, of course that the American and French hierarchies—the American after a certain amount of backing and filling—would pronounce Fred blameless in his fixed intention to obliterate millions of people, including babes at the breast, but declare that he has certainly sinned in the second instance.

Fair enough, bishops, but let's pursue things a bit further. Let's get wildly imaginative again, an unwanted state of mind for hierarchies but sometimes the only way to get into contact with reality. Let's try to enter into Fred's mind.

Could it be that there might be a *link* between Fred's fixed intention to kill millions of people and his willingness to commit adultery? Could it be that down deep in his heart, if he's prepared to do such an unspeakable act, then, what the hell, what's the harm in going to bed with a woman who's not his wife? Could it be also that down deep in his heart there is the thought that if his church has nothing significant to say about the awful situation he's a part of in his daily work except to keep at it, Fred, and don't worry, then why should he pay any attention to what it says about something that he *knows* is far less important?

Abraham believed, and it was accounted just in him. Abraham believed, Kierkegaard tells us in *Fear and Trembling*, not just when he had his knife poised, ready to cut Isaac's throat, but every step of the journey, every step of the way on the climb to the crest of the mountain.

God's command to Fred is *not* to kill several million people, a command whose reality and whose unequivocal force even the French bishops readily acknowledge. Yet Fred is prepared to do it, and his daily routine reinforces his intention to do so. Faith motivated Abraham in each of his actions, and each action drew him closer to God. But what is Fred doing? Anti-faith motivates each of his actions, and each repetition draws him farther from God. But, for whatever consolation it may be to Fred, those who put him in this position, and those who have made no effort or insufficient effort to extricate him from it, have the greater sin.

We're all at the console, then, beneath the Great Plains—not just the Pentagon strategists, not just Ronald Reagan and Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz, but Ted Kennedy and Tip O'Neill, and the American hierarchy, and you and I, too.

It's a shame there's no geiger counter to measure the soul's contamination.

What's to be done? Taking courage from our Methodist brethren as they took courage from us, let's go back to the language of the first draft and say quite simply that we are living in sin.

And what then? Let's take our cue from the Supreme Court decision of 1954 declaring "separate but equal" unconstitutional. The Court served notice that the segregation of black students would no longer have the blessings of American law, and that the shameful conditions that had been perpetrated under the "separate but equal" fiction were to be remedied with "all deliberate speed."

It's a phrase to be reckoned with. Let's put aside our "strictly conditioned moral acceptance," which by now has lost any bit of coercive power it might once have had, and state quite plainly that unless the administration starts moving with *all deliberate speed* to abandon deterrence, the same moral strictures that apply to Catholics who cooperate in any way with the procurement of an abortion will apply to any Catholic involved in any way with the production, maintenance, or control of the weapons of mass destruction.

An absurd proposal? A scandalous proposal? The symbol of our religion is the cross, a device that cornered the scandal market some two millennia ago and never quite relinquished its grip.

As for the terrible things that might follow upon such a declaration, none of them would be as terrible as the failure of the Roman Catholic church in the United States, the foremost of American Christian churches, to speak out in a time of decadence and moral confusion, and declare deterrence—the fixed intention to obliterate millions upon millions of human lives—an abomination in the sight of God and creation.

Marie Ponsot

Proserpine, Packing

I have two lives, that change like dreams.
One dream, always the same, connects the two.
It always almost seems
to come or be able to come true.
In this dream I am
my mother — her underwater
mirror, or, she my above-ground tree
with me her underground and stemming
source, her feeder-tooted downtree.
In case my crown surge (if — freezing & melting
freezing again — earth heaves, I must not heave)
I sing myself back down with words
about our systemic sameness, all channels
open to each other's benefit.

This is a dream that wants to come true
because of what would have been
if each or either of us,
the one facing the other,
had ever stood still. As it is,
the dream can't blossom;
it's stuck in autumn,
impacted, like the bulb narcissus,
like daffodil & hyacinth in bulb,
or tulips, daughtering.
While the spidered roots of her wheat
ignore my dream, it sleeps replete,
concealing my retreat
from her short defeat.

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WEST GERMANY CHOOSES A CHANCELLOR

FREDERICK O. BONKOVSKY

"All Dreams Realized After Thirty-two Years" announces a German periodical at year's end 1986. "Price Stability Finally Achieved," is the title of the accompanying graph. According to business researchers a stop in price increases — i.e., complete price stability — has been achieved. How will this economic accomplishment affect politics when West Germany elects a new national government on January 25, 1987?

Inflation has been the gravest German domestic worry since the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) was critically injured by inflation which reached a million percent; Hitler succeeded Weimar (1933-1945) and the Federal Republic was formally born in 1949.

Only once in the thirty-seven years of the Federal Republic has any of the parties singly gained a majority in the parliament. Traditionally, German elections, which must be held at least every four years, are highly competitive affairs. The Social Democratic tradition is strong. Germany is highly industrialized, and the steel workers' union (IG Metall, which also includes the equivalent of the United Auto Workers, among other groups) is the largest workers' organization in the world. It is, moreover, a generally admired, progressive, and influential force.

However, from March 1986 to September 1986, polls and projections held that the ruling Christian Democratic Union — with their Bavarian Christian Social Union sibling, (CDU-CSU) would get some 44 or 45 percent of the votes while the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) garnered several percent less; projections ranged from 41 to 44 percent for the SPD. Later estimates put the CDU-CSU party at some 48 percent while the SPD fell to 37 percent.

The messy near-collapse and sale for one DM of a country-wide labor-linked social housing corporation has made it impossible for SPD Chancellor candidate Johannes Rau to mount an effective campaign. In the huge state of North Rhine Westphalia, of which he is governor, Rau is a highly successful and charismatic politician. He is fifty-three and has a much younger wife, young child, and new baby born during the campaign. (The pregnancy and new baby received hardly any media coverage. By contrast, remember Caroline and John-John Kennedy.)

Coming from the Christian wing of the SPD, Rau's major shaping influence was the Reformed congregation of Barmen in the Ruhr Valley, which played such a central role in the 1934 opposition to Hitler. A pastor's son, Rau worked more than a decade for a Protestant youth magazine, eventually rising to editor. From the editorship, Rau stepped directly into elective SPD politics where he has been for two decades.

Last August, Rau was preferred by 52 percent over the 44 percent who found sitting Chancellor Helmut Kohl a more agreeable figure. Kohl's credentials as a faithful Roman Catholic are almost as thoroughgoing as Rau's Protestantism, despite the fact that Kohl could hardly be the son of a Catholic pastor. In their September convention, the SPD hoped they had a winner with Rau. Key issues were to be unemployment, ecology, nuclear arms and energy, and the good society. By contrast, the CDU emphasizes free market economics and aiding the business sector, while limiting social benefits.

Meanwhile, unemployment has risen from under one million in 1979-80 to over two million, exceeding 8 percent, despite four years of steady 3 percent GNP growth. A north-south split, similar to the U.S. rust belt vs. the sun belt also characterizes Germany. While Baden-Wurtenberg and Bavaria are booming and Hessen and Palatinate are doing well, Schleswig-Holstein, the Ruhr, and other northern places are in distress as old industries decay.

The 92 percent of Germany who are employed, however, have rarely had it better. The CDU notes that 600,000 new jobs have been created since 1982. It sounds like U.S. politics during the middle Reagan years. Not surprisingly, in late fall polls Kohl's popularity rose to 51 percent; Rau's slumped to 43 percent.

In August and again in November, the pollsters asked "Whom do you prefer now?" The results: CDU-CSU 44 percent and 49 percent; SPD 43 percent and 37 percent; the Free Democratic Party (FDP) 4 percent and 4 percent; the Greens 9 percent and 10 percent. The ongoing success of the Greens is noteworthy. They are the *bête noire* of the small FDP, of course, born in 1980 out of concern for the environment: acid rain, air and water pollution, chemical spills and dumping, and more recently fallout from Chernobyl, new nuclear reactors, and continued presence on German soil of thousands of nuclear warheads.

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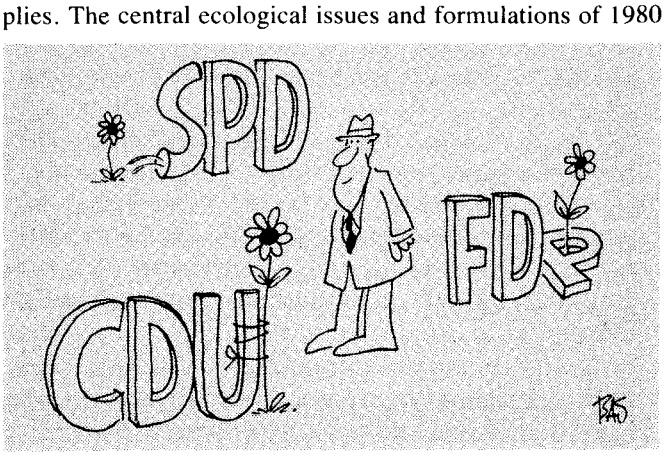
The CDU-CSU and the Greens differ measureably in style, ideology, and program. Johannes Rau is at great pains to distance the SPD from any possible cooperation with the Greens. The CDU, on the other hand, despite differences, gleefully warns that if the SPD gets many votes, the CDU will form a national coalition with the dreadful Greens.

Before Bavarian state elections in October, the German Roman Catholic primate, Joseph Cardinal Hoeffner of Cologne, head of the Catholic Bishops' Conference, made headlines with the opinion that a Roman Catholic may not vote for the Greens. The then Bavarian Minister for Education and Culture, Hans Maier, in his other capacity as head of the Roman Catholic Kirchentag Committee, announced that compromise between Catholics and Greens was impossible. The Greens propose to abolish Germany's moderately conservative abortion law. Catholics are divided over whether they may listen to such alternative voices. One youthful group, "The Church from Below," for example, challenges the traditional Catholic authorities from within the church. Any "Green mentality" in the church appears to be a challenge to the hierarchy.

When questioned about the environment, however, Cardinal Hoeffner held that as nuclear energy cannot be made 100 percent safe, it must be transcended. Plutonium waste, after all, radiates for 500,000 years. Replacing nuclear energy may not be so difficult, argues the SPD, noting that today only 6 percent of Germany's energy comes from nuclear generators. Energy use is the same as it was in 1975. But the CDU is not ready to follow this logic. And the cardinal, his critics note, does not link this issue or armament increases with the CDU-CSU.

When heavily Roman Catholic Bavaria held its state elections in October 12, 1986, Minister-president Franz Joseph Strauss, the grand old wily conservative of Central European politics, led his CSU to an absolute majority of 55.8 percent. It was a fine result, but less than 1982's 58 percent. And the Greens registered gains in that election, 7.5 percent up from 4.6 percent in 1982, and so entered the Bavarian parliament.

One-third of Germany's Green parliamentarians are teachers. The party itself is heavily concentrated among persons between twenty-five and forty. "The activist generation" has come to maturity with the plusses and minuses that implies. The central ecological issues and formulations of 1980



have proven remarkably prescient. All the parties have now taken on the Greens' concerns while, of course, not giving any credit to the Greens. All major parties agree that environmental criminals must be sternly punished, but the government has not passed new environmental legislation. The SPD refers to its proud 120-year tradition of providing a counterweight to rapacious capitalism, and promises legislation if it comes to power.

But it is the Greens whose specific and engaged proposals set the debate. They call for immediate action to reduce dependence on nuclear energy and for halting the nuclear generators, while the SPD proposes to achieve this over a ten-year period. CDU says that the SPD, and especially the Greens, are romantics who want to undo the blessings of the industrial age.

As in conservative Bavaria, so in Brokdorf, West Germany's northerly working-class city, the big gains went to the Greens. With almost a hundred thousand votes, their share increased by 30,000, to 10.4 percent compared with 6.8 percent in 1982. The Christian Democrats gained too, up to 41.9 percent from 38.6, but the CDU total was up only 3,000 votes. The key was that many traditional SPD voters simply stayed home. Participation fell from 84 percent in 1982 to 78 percent, and some SPD voters shifted to the Greens, pollsters say.

In Brokdorf, construction of a new nuclear reactor has now been halted after months of pitched protest. Here, as elsewhere, the Greens stimulated the debate and raised nasty questions. The Greens' Petra Kelly unabashedly blames "Herr Reagan" and his SDI for the collapse at Reykjavik. Foreign Minister Genscher (FDP) argues that the Soviet offers for a zero option on medium-range weapons, for reduction of intercontinental weapons, and continuation of the ABM agreements may yet be achieved. His CDU-CSU colleagues add that the Soviets are negotiating because of U.S. strength and because of SDI. The SPD seeks a middle ground between the U.S. and the USSR, without leaving NATO.

The Greens, as is well known, doubt both superpowers. They favor a demilitarized and denuclearized Europe and call specifically for a nuclear-free and alliance-free zone in Europe. Unhappily noting that Central Europeans are "nuclear hostages to the superpowers," the Greens want the German people to rethink even such taboo questions as the future of NATO.

The SPD is less dramatic, less utopian, more specific and more part of the ongoing NATO debates. The party proposes that NATO and the Warsaw Pact bilaterally change to stable (v. mobile) defense strategies and systems. They would have each side, and particularly the Federal Republic, reduce its army (presently 490,000 West Germans). In addition to strategic arms agreements and a nuclear-free corridor, the SPD has proposed reduction in the numbers of tanks and other conventional weapons on each side.

For the Kohl government and the CSU, such talk by the SPD

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(let alone by the radical Greens) threatens the entire structure of peace and freedom based on security. Like American conservatives, the Christian Democratic-Christian Social coalition sees the Soviet Union as the singular threat. The tested, tried, and for forty years successful NATO policies of deterrence through strength and nuclear weapons must not be put in doubt. To be sure, disarmament negotiations are desirable. But the American lead of guaranteeing peace and freedom through security needs to be followed. Foreign Minister Genscher agrees overall, but puts the case more moderately. Moreover, he notes that it is in German self-interest to assist the Soviet Union toward greater stability and security by assisting the Russian economic developments in those areas which do not threaten NATO security. A more secure Soviet Union is a better partner for peace in the world.

Meanwhile, the two other problems must be dealt with by political aspirants: terrorism and an influx of refugees. A small group of hard-core terrorists remains active in West Germany. In response to this fall's assassination of a leading foreign ministry official outside his home in Bonn, the conservative government has just enacted new laws regarding demonstrations. A proposed "Crown's Witness" law was withdrawn when it met opposition from the FDP. The SPD argues that the new laws threaten civil liberties.

West Germany declared itself always ready to receive political refugees of any region in its 1949 Basic Law. Thus, unlike most of Europe, it is committed to receiving and providing for these refugees with years of public support. Only after five to seven years of processing are some people declared "economic refugees" and ordered to leave the country.

In late summer, thousands of Sri Lankan and other third-world people were pouring into West Berlin from East Berlin and so overrunning West German refugee facilities. Some conservatives, notably Bavaria's Strauss, called for a change in the Basic Law. The SPD quickly rose to the challenge arguing that the refugees were really not a big problem and that Germany had a special moral and political obligation incurred during the Nazi period. What finally brought the crisis under control, however, was the compliance of the East Germans in no longer facilitating the entry of thousands of refugees into Berlin.

German democracy is alive and well. The two large state-operated television networks gave significant prime time to discussions of major issues. The parties provide good spokespersons so the ninety-minute or two-hour-long discussion-debates are at least on a par with U.S. discussions.

But the likelihood is that the difficult issues will be swept aside in the happiness over prosperity. A strong Mark, low oil prices, and 92 percent employment are good things. But Germany does not have the American advantage of lying between two oceans, thousands of miles away from its major competitors. Prosperity may allow the Federal Republic to avoid dangerous and disturbing questions. There is little evidence that other western polities will be more bold or competent than the young democracy so precariously situated between the Rhine and the Elbe.

SCREEN

REEL POLITICS

'MISS MARY,' 'WEEPING,' & 'PLATOON'

Miss Mary works well as a personal story but not as the political metaphor intended by Argentine director Maria Luisa Bemberg. To be sure, there is a fertile political context: Julie Christie plays a proper, spinsterly English governess who begins work for a rich Argentine family in the late 1930s, between the beginning of the Second World War and the emergence of Perón. The Argentines ape the English: the family's home, in the middle of the pampas, is schlock neo-Tudor. But Bemberg's attempt to parallel micro- and macrocosmic stories of repression and revolution remains at the level of pure theoretical diagram, not emotional reality.

Miss Mary has one other defect, which turns ultimately into a strength. Bemberg layers on so many time references and flashbacks at the beginning of the film that they may confuse some viewers. In the long run, they create good suspense: we know Christie has lost her job by 1945, but don't know how. Her wards include two young girls. The oldest flightily models herself on Isadora Duncan and shows frequent signs of instability. The younger one is more sexually adventurous, and we wonder if Christie suffered for her sins. The señora, in Christie's words, is "arrogant but helpless," especially to stop the father from philandering. There is also a handsome, late-adolescent son, casting longing sexual glances about; indeed, the whole Argentine upper class's aping of British atmosphere seems to have included the overheated sexual cumulous cloud that, at least in films, befogs every drawing room. The physics of such situations is always simple: the more inhibition, the more desire. It's like a second law of film thermodynamics.

There are many ways to get fired while working in such an explosive atmosphere, and Bemberg's best art consists of concealing the cause until the moment that Christie's acting saves it from being a cliché. She still has one of the most expressive faces on screen, and her range in the key scene, from prim, governessy propriety to abandoned romantic rapture, extends farther than most other actresses in most other recent films. The larger story meant nothing here; it was all Miss Mary's.

Place of Weeping makes you forgive its art for its politics. Although crudely made and lamely acted, it compels attention in its final half because of its South African setting. Indeed, perhaps one ought to regard this film—the first made by a multi-racial South African team on the recent troubles there—as simply a very powerful educational experience and moral warning.

For Americans, the film provides *déjà vu* with a twist. A white rural farmer kills one of his black workers when he tries to steal a chicken to supplement some pitifully small "rations"

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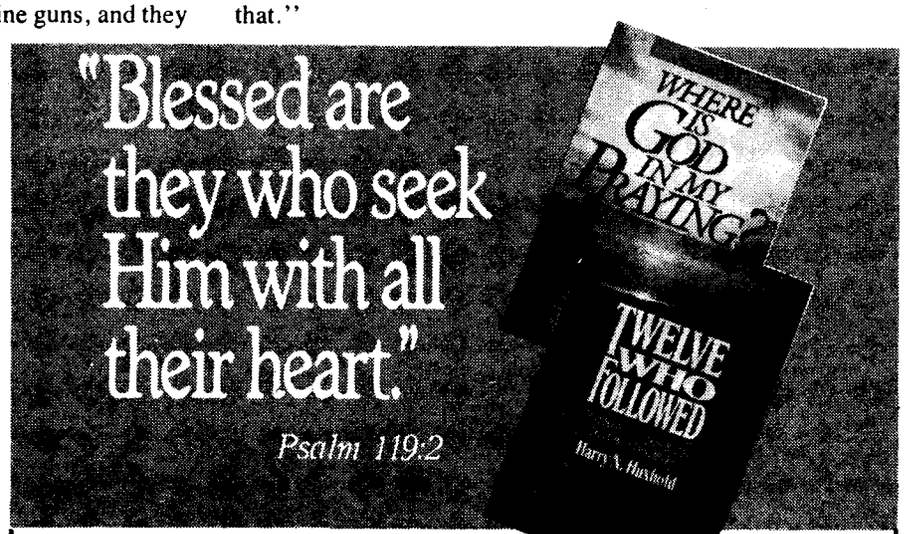
which substitute for pay. A journalist sent from the capital to investigate black tribal fighting is informed of the crime by a local black church worker, the only activist around. The church pastor, a kindly Episcopal priest, cautions the journalist and his assistant to do nothing until there is absolute proof. When they get it, the local prosecutor immediately informs his buddy the farmer, whose cronies commit more murders to cover up the initial one. On this level, for us the film functions as unintended time travel: *Place of Weeping* duplicates the sixties' South.

But there is one ominous difference. Observing the events are radical revolutionaries armed with machine guns, and they enact their own brand of justice when local "white" justice fails. Director Darrell Roodt invites us to consider the closing apocalypse as a probable symbol of his country's fate. Calmly, sadly, he shows the inevitability of radical violence when racists use violence to subvert their own system of law. American audiences who see this film may remember, despite current propaganda, how locally oppressed minorities here were often saved by the "outside agitator." Or they may be inspired to become one.

Platoon, like *Place of Weeping*, also has a heart large enough to cover a multitude of artistic sins. Indeed, its frankness and non-ideological approach to the issues place it among the best movies to date about the war in Vietnam. Far better than the manipulations of Sylvester Stallone, *Platoon* will win real sympathy for American "grunts"; it may even help the puritanically anti-military among us understand the excesses to which troops were driven in Southeast Asia. The film is grisly, violent, and often unpleasant; the language is realistically full of scatology and blasphemy. But *Platoon* is also a gripping, powerful tale, and one every American ought to see. It could have no better subtitle than one of those interstate highway rebuilding signs: "Your tax dollars at work."

Platoon dares to take on an utter cliché but ultimately wins its gamble. The central character is a staple hero of combat literature since *The Red Badge of Courage*: a raw, cleancut kid (Charlie Sheen)—a "naif" caught up in his first wartime experiences. Most of his background is depicted through the awkward device of letters home to his grandmother (like the parallel figure of the "poet" Craven in book and film of *A Walk in the Sun*). *Platoon*'s writer and director Oliver Stone bludgeons the film with images of Sheen's youth and innocence; we're even told that he dropped out of college in order to *enlist*, a gesture that earns him the nickname of "crusader" among his battle-hardened comrades. But Stone redeems the Galahad motif with good doses of sarcastic wit. When Sheen explains that it seems unfair that only the poor had to fight, one black grunt comments, "You've got to be rich to begin with even to think like that."


"Blessed are they who seek Him with all their heart."
Psalm 119:2
WHERE IS GOD IN MY PRAYING?
TWELVE WHO FOLLOWED
Harry N. Huxhold

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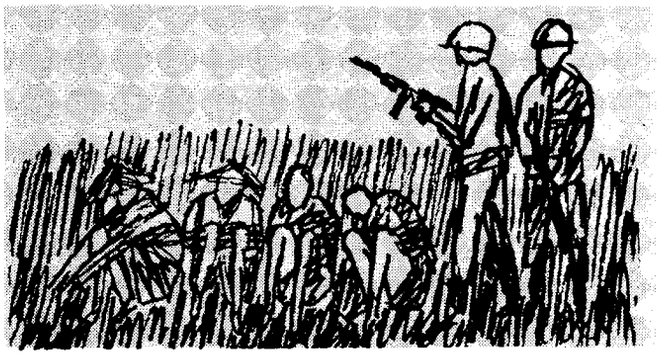

The members of the platoon also veer toward cliches—only to evade them. On one level, they resemble those typical arrays of World War II "melting pot" Americans from everywhere; on another, they are not just all poor but predominantly black. Even among the stereotypical figures nuances abound: one vicious "cracker" is played by Kevin Dillon with just enough wild glee to avoid our hatred. True to Vietnam stories, the platoon is led by an ineffective lieutenant who doesn't know the ropes, and it's battled over by two sergeants who do. True to war and film tradition, one is a sadist (Tom Berenger), the other a great jungle fighter who questions the war with increasing intensity (William Dafoe). Oliver Stone's screenplay is sage enough to give us reason to respect Berenger, and to understand Sheen's attraction to him. The key plot twist occurs when Dafoe saves some Vietnamese villagers from execution by Berenger, an episode that shapes Sheen's ultimate choice between his two mentors. *Platoon* thus restores the fullness of history: this is exactly what happened at My Lai when other American soldiers tried to stop Lt. Calley from killing.

Often it is said that it takes some time for great art to emerge from a war, for example, the spate of memoirs of World War I toward the end of the 1920s. In the last decade, Vietnam has resulted mostly in cartoons: witness *Rambo*'s attempt to take everything out of context and present the North Vietnamese as jungle incompetents and Americans as intuitive guerrilla fighters. But was the anti-war *Apolcalypse Now* that different when it adapted *Heart of Darkness* to Vietnam? That film, brilliant as it was (and with the "naif" played by Charlie Sheen's father, Martin) was not just out of context, but out of Africa.

Platoon dares to take up particulars and present Vietnam from a soldier's point of view. Writer/director Stone served as a "grunt" and it shows. Unlike *Rambo*, *Platoon* presents the enemy as able fighters; unlike *Rambo*, it sees not just "our boys" but the Asian villagers, too, as victims. Yet unlike an anti-war tract, *Platoon* presents the humanity of the American army. Even the music distinguishes it: here are no rock "video" sequences, or Wagnerian echoes to equate Americans and Nazis, but Barber's "Adagio for Strings," an elegiac tribute to everyone's sufferings. *Platoon* is neither heroical nor satirical but, at its best, tragic. TOM O'BRIEN

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STAGE

QUESTS & CONSOLATIONS

'THE COMMON PURSUIT'

Simon Gray's *The Common Pursuit* has settled into a comfortable run at the Promenade Theatre. Its success, I assume, has nothing to do with F. R. Leavis, whose 1952 collection of essays is the source of the play's title and the name of the journal founded by the Cambridge undergraduates whose growing pains the play chronicles. Leavis in his turn, as he explains in his preface, borrowed the title from T. S. Eliot's "The Function of Criticism," in which Eliot defines "common pursuit of true judgment" as shared activity. On the assumption that the word "common" might be misconstrued, and certainly intent on not having his judgmental pursuit confused with the kind of critical consensus he mocks in his comments on *Horizon* in "The Progress of Poesy," Leavis chooses an epigraph from Henry James. Declining to become chairman of the English Association, James explained, "I believe only in absolutely independent, individual and lonely virtue, and in the serenely unsociable (or if need be at a pinch sulky and sullen) practice of the same." James's words might well be used to describe Stuart Thorne, Gray's protagonist, but

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James, unlike Thorne, has a string of fine novels to bulwark his position. Even Leavis, who rather gloried in being attacked as a "cold intellectual," has his volumes of criticism to give substance to his sense of rectitude. Poor Thorne, being a character in a play, has no such offstage support. All that we have to establish his superiority is what he says and does on stage and the way the other characters react to him. In the first act, about to have sex with his beloved, he sees out the window the arrival of a poet he admires, and he and Marigold quickly dress and go to enlist the man's support for the magazine they are about to establish. Coitus interruptus as a sign of intellectual vigor?

Simon Gray has said how much he hated Cambridge and that Leavis was one of the few oases in a professorial desert, but the playwright's use of *The Common Pursuit* is surely ironic. Thorne's borrowing of that title for his journal — with Leavis's admonitory blessing — is presumably an indication that his is a sincere quest for excellence. There is, however, a certain confusion between his desire to put out a good magazine and his ambition to establish himself as a literary eminence (like Leavis at *Scrutiny*). For either or both these goals, as the uncompleted sex act indicates, he is willing to put aside not the consolations of the flesh (he and Marigold will get to bed) but the sense of closeness between one person and another. As the play progresses, Thorne goes out into the post-Cambridge world where he tries and fails to keep his magazine alive in a society which has a taste for the imperfect, the compromised, the flashy. Although he is at the center of the group which formed around him at Cambridge, there is no indication that his pursuit is a common one. He is the magazine. His friends, who try to help or to protect him, are not involved in a shared editorial task but are endeavoring to keep alive the image of Thorne as an ideal, an intellectual — perhaps spiritual — will-o'-the-wisp they follow as they stumble through the swamp of everyday existence. When Thorne at last gives up the journal and turns biographer, he discovers that his subject — offstage poet of the first scene — is not a very nice man. He never makes the jump to himself.

Since the play begins and ends with undergraduate characters gathering to plan the dream magazine, and shows in between what the next twenty years make of them, it looks like another *Big Chill* exercise in youthful promise unfulfilled, youthful idealism tarnished. That is apparently not what Gray has in mind. The seeds of what the characters become are carefully planted in the first scene. Not only does the non-sex act prepare us for the part Thorne will play, but it does the same for Marigold. Her acquiescence at the beginning is an indication of how she will make herself secondary and supportive to Thorne even to the extent of aborting the child she wants. As with Marigold, so with the other characters. The glib history student becomes the even glibber professor, turning out coffee table books while he continues his own pursuit — of sex, not literary excellence. The outspoken, somewhat distant perfectionist turns out to be capable only of denigration, even of those he admires, and his motivation, occasioned by his homosexuality, is the self-hatred that leads him to court the rough trade that finally kills him. The gossipy clown becomes a gossipy clownish literary host on television. Musgrove, who is in love with Thorne and Marigold and the whole enterprise, wants only to be of service, and finally — after it appears that Thorne is suffering from belated symbolic sterility — he services Marigold and gives her the child she wants. Thorne loses not only his magazine but the wife that he at last recognizes as dearer to him than *The Common Pursuit*.

What are we to make of this? The audiences that have taken to the play are probably responding to the sadness of it all, seeing in Thorne and company an image of their own fall from youthful grace. Leavis, I suspect, would see it for the soap opera it is, the sentimental manipulation of shallowly conceived characters to make the obvious point that time takes the shine off people and shows them up for what they have always been. It is easy to watch them go through their paces and to listen to them, although their articulateness never seems to me the wit for which Gray is often praised. I have not heard much of that since *Butley*, and it is fifteen years since that play's self-pitying phrasemaker gave Gray the reputation that he carries into each new production. The performances at the Promenade are, for the most part, efficient evocations of Gray's characters, but the judgment is negative criticism masked as praise. The flatness of character and performance is underlined by the presence of Michael Countryman as Musgrove. He manages to suggest a depth in the character, a combination of awkwardness, uncertainty, amiability, self-confidence, and acquisitiveness (for people not things), that carries him far beyond the stereotypical demands of the play. Watching Countryman at work makes one wish that Gray, in redoing *The Common Pursuit* for this production, had gone for complexity rather than the gloss that spells success in New York.

GERALD WEALES

Nancy G. Westerfield

Smoke

In the morning the old man
Is up early, out filling his birdbath;
"Even in December," he says, "they come
If there's water to be had." True enough,
A cardinal waits like a purl
Of scarlet yarn knit into the juniper.
Sidelong, his breath takes wing on the air
Like a white bird; the ice smokes
Where he is spigoting warmth over freeze.
Already he has done a washerload the way
She taught him before her requiem,
And the dryer vents from the cellar
Like a fumarole, wreathing him shoes
To head in spitfires of steam. The sun
Burns higher, smoking the mists of darkness
Over the world's edge; in the garden
Frost is burning away like last night's
Dream of a woman in his bed.

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Paradoxes all spilled out

MORE LETTERS OF OSCAR WILDE
Edited by Rupert Hart-Davis
Vanguard Press, $14.95, 215 pp.

William Dunlea

Oscar Wilde is one of the most colorful legends of world literature, endlessly fascinating, forever "onstage." He never grew tired of revealing himself to us, nor are we likely to tire of him as long as there are hidden treasure-hunters of the mettle of Rupert Hart-Davis in our midst. Though he modestly represents his latest collection of Wilde's correspondence (1875-1900) as a supplement to his monumental *Letters of Oscar Wilde* (1962, now out of print), it offers us many choice backstage glimpses into the theater — and finally the tragedy — that was Wilde. In so doing, this new volume becomes a miniature self-portrait of Wilde the man and the exotic, as well as a veritable kaleidoscope of the once-famous and now (mostly) footnoted among his contemporaries; they shuffled off but Wilde is still "there."

Seeking a license for the production of his first play (1880), Wilde announces, "I am working at dramatic art because it's the *democratic* art and I want fame." Having won his First in Greats (classics) in 1878, two years later he congratulates a friend on his Second: "Greats is the only fine school at Oxford, the only sphere of thought where one can be simultaneously brilliant and unreasonable, speculative and well-informed, creative as well as critical, and write with all the passion of youth about truths which belong to the august serenity of old age."

By 1881 Wilde was already dame culture's gadfly to the London *beau monde* and being caricatured as Benthorne, poet and jack-of-all-esthetes, in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, whose U.S. production in 1882 provided the launching pad for Wilde's fabulous American romp (they called it a literary tour). He exhilarated:

> A great sympathetic electric people who cheered and applauded and gave me a sense of serene power that even being abused by the *Saturday Review* never did.. . . At Philadelphia a new school of design is called after me and they really are beginning to love and know beautiful art. . . . I travel in such state, for in a *free* country one cannot live without slaves and I have slaves — black, yellow, and white.

Whether lecturing cozy, genteel, English provincials or taking in thousands of tumultuous American midwesterners at a go, he is a light unto the Philistines. If culture was his cause, art was his religion. Bard of the *fin de siècle*, pied piper of early modernism, art-for-art's-sake supplied the decadent banner under which he vitalized musty Victorian esthetics and moribund Victorian theater.

In a letter of 1890 he predicts — accurately — that his just completed *Picture of Dorian Gray* will "make a sensation." He did not foresee — or did he ? — that with it he had written his own epitaph. Bigger successes are to come in the theater. He gives George Alexander, actor-director of *Lady Windermere's Fan*, a magisterial dressing-down for not executing his most minute staging instructions: "Details in life are of no importance, but in art details are vital." With *An Ideal Husband* early in 1895 all London is at his feet.

On sabbatical in Algiers with "Bosie" (Lord Alfred Douglas) he rhapsodizes, "the Kabyle boys are quite lovely . . . Bosie and I have taken to hashish; it is quite exquisite: three puffs and then peace and love." On excursion in the mountains, "shepherds fluted on reeds to us. We were followed by lovely brown things from forest to forest. The beggars have profiles, so the problem of poverty is easily solved." Soon after his return to London for the premiere of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the success story ends in a real life comedy of errors involving Bosie's dotty father, the Marquess of Queensberry, which in turn leads to the courtroom farce whose ultimate effect is to make Wilde a martyr in a rather different cause than art.

Not long before Wilde's quixotic challenge to Queensberry, an interview appeared, "Mr. Oscar Wilde on Mr. Oscar Wilde" (included here), contrived by the writer and his friend Robert Ross. It indicates the arrogance that went before the fall. Here Wilde indulges himself to the point of self-caricature. He pontificates, "The personality of the artist is not a thing the public should know anything about. It is too accidental." But Wilde's whole career contradicts this pronouncement, as indeed does he a few paragraphs later when he declares, "Humility is for the hypocrite, modesty for the incompetent." He allows that "only mediocrities improve." The import of *Earnest*? "That we should treat all the trivial things of life very seriously and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality." The notion that "a single dramatist in this century has in the smallest degree influenced" him is imperiously discarded. A few other writers, he concedes, may inform his poetry and fiction — but the concession gives little ground, since "style must be in one's soul before he can recognize it in others." Disclaiming any leaning toward realism, he dismisses

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that genre as "only a background; it cannot form an artistic motive for a play that is to be a work of art." As always, the London reviewers are his *bêtes noires*.

Up to this point the letters display the shimmering insouciance at the surface of the paradox which permeated the man. From Reading prison emerges more and more fully the dark underside — until it takes center stage. Life becomes as horrendously "real as a dream." Bankrupt and deserted by all but a handful of his friends, he bears up well under the ordeal. The aftermath of his release — permanent separation from his wife and children on brutally punitive terms — turns out to be more painful than his incarceration. He wryly concludes that he has been "quite incapable" of managing his affairs. "I don't know what to do with money except to throw it away." All he wants now is anonymity (under the alias of "Sebastian Helmeth") and "freedom from English people." France, the "modern mother of all artists," offers him "a lovely asylum."

But soon he is plagued by "that detestable preoccupation with money that poverty entails . . . fatal to all fine things." But not necessarily to wisdom, as he discovers that "suffering is the most real mode of life, the one for which we are all ultimately created." He finds only passing gratification in the nearly unanimous acclaim accorded his *Ballad of Reading Gaol*, which will stand as his last testament to the world. For he has "lost the joy of writing." From Napoule in 1898 he laments, "I am leading a very good life and it does not agree with me. There is a sad lack of fauns in the pinewoods, and if the sea has its Proteus he is always disguised as an elderly Member of Parliament." Yet the fisherfolk have "beautiful eyes, crisp hair of a hyacinth color, and no morals: an ideal race." "I must advertise for some new friends. I don't want any certificates of good character. I should in fact object to them." Till the end, however, he remains devoted to Bosie, the love of his life.

The pleas for money become desperate. He smudges an inscribed copy of a play and asks his publisher to ask one and six pence for it. Of a benefactor he complains that he "carries out the traditions of the ancient Midas." "If I ask him to lend me five francs he grows yellow and takes to his bed." Winter 1900: "I am now *neurasthenic*. My doctor says I have all the symptoms. It is comforting to have them *all*, it makes one a perfect type." In the fall he is operated on (unsuccessfully) for more serious complications than neurasthenia, and his last pathetic letter is a plea from his deathbed for help in paying the surgeon.

To a Catholic socialist friend he had written, "What is to become of an indolent hedonist like myself if socialism and the church join forces against me? I want to stand apart and look on, being neither for God nor for his enemies. This, I hope, will be allowed." If, before he died, Wilde finally opened his eyes to the author of the beauty which he worshiped — and these letters give no iindication — we may be sure that esthetics, after all, had something to do with it.

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BIBLICAL EXEGESIS AND CHURCH DOCTRINE

Raymond E. Brown
Paulist, $8.95, 171 pp.

Pheme Perkins

The first five chapters of this book provide a forceful statement of the proper relationship between exegesis and doctrine in Roman Catholic theology.

The additional five chapters on the diverse views of the Spirit, types of local churches, early preaching as reflected in Acts, the shroud of Turin, and exegetical errors in R. Laurentin's treatment of the infancy narratives are really peripheral to the argument of the first section. They can be useful references for introductory courses or discussion groups, though the material on local churches has been better treated in the author's earlier works. One feels somewhat as though this material has simply been included to "clear the files" of recent talks the author has given. Of course, it is always useful to have such material available, but the reader will find the connections to the argument advanced in the first five chapters somewhat forced.

In the first half of the book, also based on lectures, Father Brown does an excellent job of staking out a relatively conservative, centrist position on the relationship between exegesis and dogma. One wishes that his detractors, both from the Bultmannian left and the "fundamentalists" of the radical Catholic right, had the intellectual integrity and patience that Father Brown exhibits in formulating his position. In seeing the movie *The Chosen*, I was struck by the respect with which the film's two fathers regarded each other. Both are students of Torah, one a Hasid and the other a twentieth-century scholar, but each man honors the other's pursuit of the truth. Father Brown has the well-deserved right to be among the "wise" in this regard. It is a sad commentary on the intellectual life of contemporary Roman Catholicism that those with whom he is forced to dialogue do not respect a search for the truth.

Polemic aside — and this is a very polemical book — *Biblical Exegesis* makes an important contribution toward clarifying what an orthodox Roman Catholic position about the relationship between exegesis and dogma is. Father Brown challenges a number of misconceptions. First, the "two sources" view of Scripture and tradition tends to create the misconception that dogma can be anything whether or not it has any connection to what is revealed in Scripture. Father Brown argues that what is believed is Christian revelation embodied in the tradition of the church. The New Testament is the first-century phase of that tradition. But, as such, it is not deficient. In living with that tradition, however, the community came to more articulate and even to some quite different ways of expressing the meaning of that revelation. These developments are illustrated in doctrines of sacramental theology, priestly office, and Mariology, none of which has much explicit elaboration in Scripture.

Second, since Scripture cannot be divorced from the believing community, both liberal and conservative fundamentalism must be rejected. Conservative fundamentalism does not respect the process of reflection, adaptation, and interpretation that is responsible for the fact that we even have a Scripture and that is clearly evident within Scripture itself. Liberal fundamentalism presumes that anything which has developed beyond the explicit intention of New Testament authors or the shaping of New Testament communities is to be treated as Jesus treated some of the Pharisees' "tradi-

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tions of the elders," as contrary to the revealed will of God.

Most theological or ideological uses of New Testament scholarship in our time fall into either the conservative or liberal fundamentalism which Father Brown so rightly rejects. The political and ecclesial pressures from the extremes make it almost impossible for those of us who agree with his basic "centrist" position to engage in the kind of theological reflection which ought to follow on such a book.

We need, for instance, to examine how the development(s) of doctrine speak from and to various cultural contexts. We need to discuss the hermeneutical function of dogma in the interpretative task. As Father Brown acknowledges, we need to reflect on the issues being raised by "canonical criticism" among Protestant theologians. Certainly the shape of such reflection will be different in a Catholic context.

But perhaps the saddest question the apologetic cast of this book raises for the reader is that with which we began this review. Can the larger Catholic community learn, as it should, the values of scholarly inquiry, intellectual discipline, and civility? Or is ignorant posturing, ideological name-calling, and consistent misrepresentation of others' work, such as Father Brown has repeatedly suffered, going to continue to be tolerated and even rewarded? We all owe Father Brown a great debt for intellectual clarity and personal integrity.

FREE TO WORSHIP OR NOT

THE FIRST LIBERTY
RELIGION AND THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC
William Lee Miller
Knopf, $24.95, 373 pp.

Robert L. Spaeth

As the 1986 political party caucuses drew near, the executive director of the Minnesota Catholic Conference mailed a memo to the state's "pastors and pastoral people." Positing that this year presents "the possibility of changing the face of government here in Minnesota" and noting that "in our state 82.36 percent of the church-affiliated people are Catholics or Lutherans," the monsignor asked a question that to him was rhetorical: "Should not government reflect our gospel-grounded value system?"

Questions, or opinions, of this sort — clever combinations of religion and politics — normally attract replies: agreement or denunciation, delight or outrage. They deserve more — reflection on history, analysis of constitutional principles, consideration of the religious diversity of the United States and of its special political life. A letter-to-the-editor response wouldn't do; a book would be required.

William Lee Miller has written the book. *The First Liberty* investigates how this nation secured religious freedom at its very founding, inquires into certain colonial beginnings of that freedom, and reviews the complex religious-political history that we have experienced in the past two centuries. Miller calls his essays "an account" and "a commentary," but they would be more accurately named "meditations," for they draw us into their subjects and down to their depths, whence we emerge with feelings and conclusions all our own.

Miller first sets us in the Virginia of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, particularly in the legislative session of 1785-86, where Madison's awesome political skills pushed to passage the "Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" drafted by Jefferson back in 1777. The bill in part proclaimed that "all men shall be free to profess, and by argument

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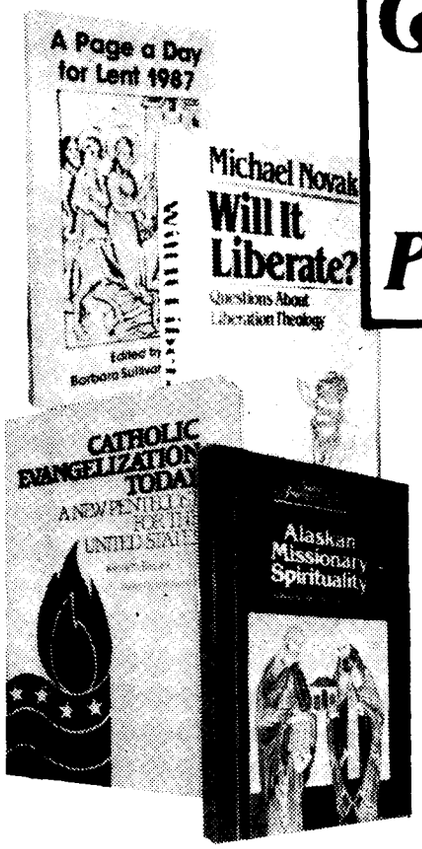

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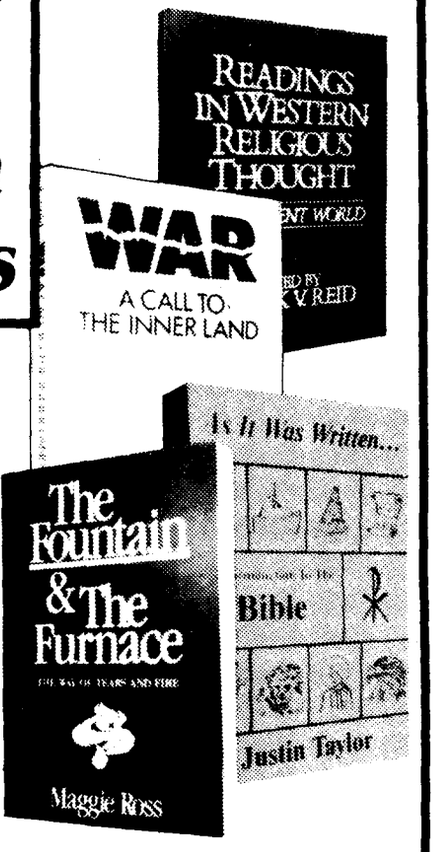

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to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities."

It was an extraordinary achievement. The bill would not have been enacted without the support of religious groups whose views did not flow from the same sources as Madison's and Jefferson's. As Miller puts it — he puts many things very well — "Jefferson, Madison, and a small group of other heirs of the Enlightenment furnished much of the brain power, but the religion of revival furnished the troops." In a letter to Jefferson in Paris, Madison foresaw, and exaggerated, the lasting effects; the bill, he wrote, has "extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind." Perhaps not extinguished but certainly dampened.

Madison himself is the subject of Miller's second meditation. In the formation of America's tradition of church-state relationships, Madison made four crucial contributions: his amendments to the 1776 Virginia Declaration of Rights; his "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments" of 1785; his legislative work on the bill mentioned above; and his work in Congress on the Bill of Rights. Clearing Madison is worth a great deal of our attention.

The "Memorial and Remonstrance" especially repays close study. Miller paraphrases a portion of its argument: "If you want pure, effective, real, and lively belief, then do not use coercion to support it." An American Catholic of the 1980s contemplating the full implications of this argument will no doubt drift to thinking about the Vatican, with results hardly predictable.

The First Liberty next leaps back in time another century and a half, to the New England of Roger Williams, who built a support for separation of church and state on religious not secular footings. Miller quotes from one of Williams's many hortatory publications: "And oh! *since the commonweal cannot* without a spiritual rape force the consciences of all to one worship, oh, that it may never commit that rape . . . which a stronger arm and sword may soon . . . arise to alter." This is not the Madisonian style, but it is close to Madisonian thinking.

In the mid-seventeenth century those who advocated religious liberty often drew the line against Jews and Catholics. John Milton in his *Areopagitica* excluded "popery and open superstition" from the dissenting ideas that deserved toleration. Not so Roger Williams. Miller insists that Williams fought hardest against "the pernicious evil of persecuting anybody, of coercing anybody, 'for cause of conscience.' " "Anybody" to Roger Williams meant Jews and Catholics as well as the "anybodies" of various Protestant denominations.

Miller's fourth and final essay, called "Reflections after Two Centuries," functions as a reminder that a knowledge of the roots of our religious liberty, though vitally important, is not enough. For after the First Amendment anchored that liberty in fundamental law, the religious complexion of the nation changed again and again, mainly by successive waves of immigration. Catholics came after a time to be the largest religious body in the country. No longer could Sam Adams's view be endorsed: "Much more is to be dreaded from the growth of Popery in America than Stamp Acts or any other Acts destructive of men's civil rights." And the small American Jewish community, fighting time and again against hatred imported from Europe, came, in Miller's words, to have "an importance to the American religio-political drama out of all proportion to its numerical membership — a distinct, complex, and essential relation to the central American tradition of religious liberty."

There is no conclusion to the meditations of *The First Liberty*, as there is no conclusion to the interplay of America's religions with America's politics. For the monsignor who wants Minnesota's laws to reflect our "gospel-grounded value system" (*ours* or *his*?), we can of course suggest a reading of Madison's "Memorial and Remonstrance," where the use of "Religion as an engine of civil policy" is said to be "an unhallowed perversion of the means of salvation." But the monsignor would probably reply that the subject is more complicated than that. He would be right.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

27, 1986 Interim Restraints Decision alleges that the administration views SALT II as "fit to be trampled underfoot." Not so. The problem has been that SALT II did not lead to *mutual* restraint in the acquisition of nuclear weapons, but rather a massive increase in the deployment of Soviet strategic offensive nuclear systems, compared to a modest modernization of U.S. systems long deployed. Soviet violation of the crucial SALT II ban on the deployment of more than one new ICBM has exacerbated this situation.

Indeed, one wonders how you can possibly argue that "to abandon SALT is to forsake what little restraint the superpowers have observed in respect to strategic weapons in the last decade," and that "the proof of the constraint is considerable, undeniable in terms of rocket launchers and the number of nuclear warheads alone."

The U.S. signed SALT II on June 18, 1979. It was not until *six* years later that we began to deploy the B-1. The first ten MX missiles were not scheduled to become operational until late 1986. Deployment of the Trident II SLBM is not scheduled until 1989. In contrast, Soviet production lines for stragegic weapons have remained "hot." That is why from the signing of SALT II in June 1979 to December 1982 the Soviet Union was *adding* stragetic weapons to its inventory while the U.S. was *withdrawing* obsolescent ones. That is why the number of Soviet strategic ballistic missile warheads increased by 50 percent over that period, while the number of such U.S. warheads actually declined. Overall, since 1979 under SALT II Soviet strategic warheads have almost doubled in number. The SALT framework wasn't working. It was providing an illusion of restraint, not the reality.

That is why the president has called upon the Soviets to join us in establishing a new framework of genuine mutual restraint as we attempt to negotiate an agreement.

While the U.S. is pursuing such a framework, the United States has pledged not to deploy more strategic nuclear delivery vehicles than does the Soviet Union, nor will we deploy more strategic ballistic missile warheads than do the Soviets.

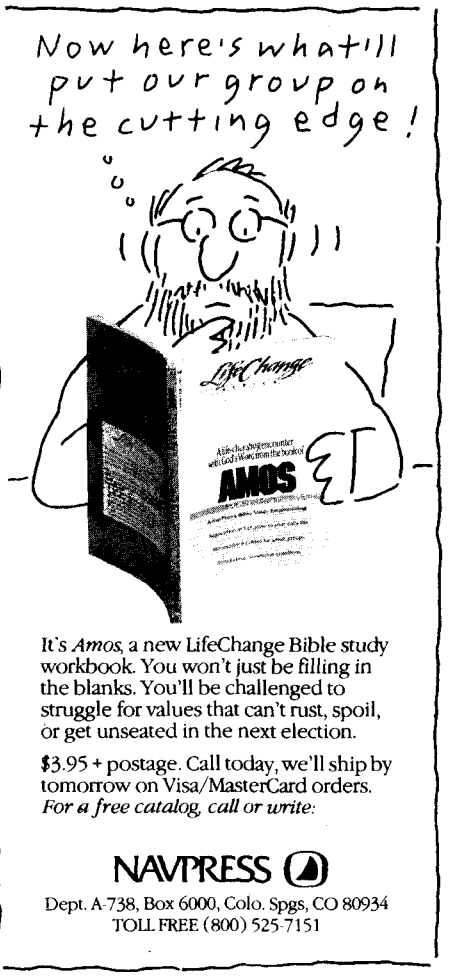
Moreover, now the opportunity exists for agreements which for the first time significantly reduce nuclear weapons. If the Soviet Union will join the U.S. in establishing a framework of mutual restraint, and bargain constructively in Geneva, we can see this opportunity fulfilled.

Informed debate of arms control policy is useful and even necessary. But such debate must begin with an accurate representation of the policies and the facts.

MATTHEW F. MURPHY
U.S. Arms Control and
Disarmament Agency

The editors reply:

We appreciate Mr. Murphy's readi-



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ness to respond to our arms-control editorials, and we regret our delay in getting his response into an issue. We also regret, however, that in a rush to defend his agency and his administration in every particular and to discredit any source of criticism, he has skirted both the editorials' main points and the spirit in which they were written.

Our June 6 editorial, for example, discussed widely voiced appeals for "Rethinking Arms Control." As Mr. Murphy knows, such appeals have been made from within as well as outside the Reagan administration. Much of what Mr. Murphy ascribes to *Commonweal* was, in fact, a discussion of arguments made by Thomas C. Schelling, whose criticism challenged the arms control theories not only of the present administration but of the three administrations preceding it and of many peace activists as well. Mr. Murphy's narrow response is to contend that this administration, unlike its predecessors, alone escapes Schelling's strictures, a position that evidently did not convince Schelling himself, whose article in *Foreign Affairs* appeared in 1985. The fact that the Reagan administration has concerned itself with the character as well as the numbers of *Soviet* weapons falls far short of the notion of a coherent arms control policy built on "reciprocal vulnerability" that Schelling proposed and we discussed. In our view, neither the MX policy nor the SDI "revolution" that the administration has launched reflects a primary concern with avoiding destabilizing systems.

Our second editorial argued that the administration's announced intention to abandon SALT II was counterproductive and augured ill for arms control. Mr. Murphy replies, "the SALT framework wasn't working," and cites Soviet vigor and U.S. delays in adding to strategic arsenals after 1979. His figures are selective; he directly attributes developments to the "SALT II framework" that have independent causes; he recognizes neither significant U.S. force modernization during this period nor Soviet retirement of over a thousand missiles in order to stay within SALT limits. But leaving aside these omissions and granting (as did our editorial) the flawed nature of SALT II, the questions remain: Would the situation have been worse without the agreement? Will it be worse now? Our editorial — and the CIA — pointed out the Soviets' capacity to add warheads in the near future much more quickly than the U.S. Mr. Murphy does not address this point.

In between these very limited strikes on our main points, Mr. Murphy takes issue on a number of subordinate ones.

We listed the bishops' letter as *one* among a series of pressures on this administration over the course of its first term. The fact that the administration urged deep cuts before the letter was actually published hardly demonstrates that the extended process of drafting the letter had no impact on the administration in other respects, nor does it rebut our real point, that the administration's pursuit of arms control has appeared uncertain apart from prodding by Congress, the freeze movement, etc.

Likewise, our point about the ABM treaty's "*original* spirit," which was based on Schelling's account, is not rebutted by noting that, as it turned out, the defense system the treaty permitted each nation was used by the Soviets (but not by the U.S.) to defend a city. Nor were we unaware, in challenging U.S. insistence on reaching parity in tested ASAT systems, that verification or definition might pose serious problems for a ban. "The U.S.," we wrote, "might argue against restricting ASATs on the basis of other reasons."

We could pursue other points that Mr. Murphy raises, about the likelihood of a negotiated deployment of SDI, for example. It would be better, however, to focus on the main lines of our concern: whether the administration (or its critics, for that matter) has a coherent approach to arms control, and whether the administration, faced with real possibilities, has the will to bring them to fruition. In the wake of Reykjavik, these questions are being asked even more widely. Mr. Murphy's letter, written before Reykjavik, constitutes a lawyer's brief much more than a convincing response.

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Year after year the support of the Associates has been essential to the survival of *Commonweal*. To all these friends — old, new, and soon to join the ranks — we express our deepest gratitude for this continuing support, and our best wishes for 1987.

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